

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARKEY-SHAYS AMENDMENT SWEEPS THROUGH HOUSE 278-146; *HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT ORDERED TO SCREEN ALL PACKAGES PLACED IN THE CARGO HOLD OF PASSENGER PLANES***

**Washington, DC:** Last night, in a sharp rebuke to the Administration's foot-dragging on a critical homeland security matter, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported Rep. Ed Markey's (D-MA) Amendment to the Homeland Security Department's appropriations bill that would end the practice of allowing unscreened, un-inspected packages to be placed in the cargo hold of passenger planes. Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT) cosponsored the amendment, which passed by a vote of 278-146.

"When travelers get on a passenger plane, they are thoroughly screened and inspected from their head to their shoes," noted Markey. "But when a commercial cargo company ships a box on the same plane, it is placed in the cargo-hold under your well-screened pair of shoes without any physical screening or inspection whatsoever. This is folly. While TSA employees are required to examine the booties on a baby's feet, no one is inspecting the boxes destined for the belly of a Boeing. Is there any question where a bomb is more likely to be placed?"

According to the General Accounting Office, an estimated 22 percent of all cargo is carried on passenger planes. The Markey amendment prohibits funding security plans that neglect the physical screening of passenger-plane cargo. It is based on a bipartisan Markey-Shays bill, the USA Cargo Act, H.R. 2455.

"What do we mean by 'screening?'" Markey asked rhetorically, "We mean the same level of physical inspection of passenger-plane cargo as is applied to passenger-plane luggage and passenger themselves. What do we NOT mean? We do NOT mean the 'known shipper' program, which is the current excuse for allowing commercial cargo to be carried on passenger planes without physical screening."

Although The Department of Homeland Security and cargo-shipping interests have argued that it would be too burdensome to screen cargo destined for passenger planes, it was a common practice prior to September 11 for any package received from an 'unknown shipper', and it continues to be the practice for packages from 'unknown shippers' inbound from airports overseas.

"The technology is not only available – it is in constant use internationally," said Markey. "We need to end the pretense that we have secured passenger airliners against bombs, and do what is necessary to make such security a reality."

For more information, please go to [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).

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